**LINGUISTICS PORTFOLIO**

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**OVERVIEW**

This was an interesting assignment. I love playing with language and this was actually fun to do. I most enjoyed writing the poems with an Appalachian dialect, probably because it is what is most comfortable to me, but also because I think the language is so rich and colorful. The most challenging aspect was working with other dialects. I chose the activities that used Appalachian dialects because those are easy for me, but I also wanted to do the Varieties of English activity and use dialects that are unfamiliar to me. I had to do some searching to pull that off. This is important to understand because our classrooms are not homogeneous groups. I think back to the influx of people that came to the area from New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. These children enrolled in our schools and they spoke to us Appalachian teachers the only way they knew to speak and we did not understand a word some of them said. Understanding the nuances of language matters because effective communication is so critical in the classroom. Exposing children to these different dialects is important too, whether we do it through our own voices, or through literature, because children need to understand that the world is larger than this little corner that we occupy.

**BECAUSE THE FORMS OF WORDS MATTER**

1. The item at the grocery store checkout I chose to describe to a young child is a Reese’s Cup.

It is round and you eat it. It is a glop of peanut butter in the middle and is covered in chocolate. It’s a little squishy.

1. The Reese’s Cup

O Reese’s Cup, thou art yummy!

The chocolate around

Your creamy peanut butter

Leads me to temptation

You have found my hips

And made your home

Causing me shame

This bathing suit season.

1. When asked to describe a Reese’s Cup in no more than three sentences to a young child, I found myself looking for the most effective, but simplest, way to make my point. Comparatively, when asked to describe the Reese’s Cup in poetry, I felt like I had more creative license and could incorporate more of my feelings about the object. Writing the poetry felt “freer” to me. By being able to use more creative language in the poem, I feel like the Reese’s Cup has more meaning to me through that medium. When I use simplistic language to describe it, I have reduced it to those three sentences giving it a function (“you eat it”). I believe the more *effective* piece is the prose. The more *interesting* piece is the poetry.

**LANGUAGE AWARENESS**

If language is a web, are you a spider or a fly?

“ ‘*Come into my parlor,’ said the spider to the fly*.” A spider crafts the web; that delicate, stringy creation that takes hours upon hours to build. From a distance, the web is a glorious creation; artistic, graceful. The spider is the master of the web, owning its every thread. The fly, however, is trapped, helpless, at the mercy of the spider. Once trapped, the fly is made a meal for the spider. I refuse to be trapped by language. I choose to use language as a tool, crafting my web, using it to meet my needs. I am the spider.

**RUINING A POEM**



A-boilin’ it to make it hot

Icin’ it down to make it cold

Puttin’ lemmin in it to make it tart

Sugar in it to make it sweet.

Come set on the porch a spell and git yerself a big ol’ glass of sweet tea.



We boil the tea to make it hot

We ice the tea to make it cold

We add lemon to make it sour

And sugar to make it sweet

Come, join me on the veranda for a nice visit and please, enjoy a tall glass of sweet tea with me.

1. Using Standard English definitely removes the “charm” of the poem about making tea. The Standard English version feels “stuffy”, and not really interesting. I feel like I’d need little lacy gloves and have to drink with my pinkie out. The Appalachia dialect poem about making tea sounds like my grandmother giving instructions in her kitchen, and that’s home to me. It’s what I remember. The dialect gives the piece character and personality and color. Sure, the standard English version is probably “correct”, but it lacks that character. The Appalachian dialect poem is definitely the more interesting, and the most effective (since the poem is an invitation). I can hear a specific voice with that one. It’s a soft, slow, woman’s voice and it’s full of all the love it can hold. It’s welcoming. The Standard English version just feels clipped and forced.

**VARIETIES OF ENGLISH**

Thou shalt not commit adultery. (Exodus 20:14)

“Ah tole you not to gogo wit his ol lady, sha” (Cajun English)

“Hide yo wifes, cuz they rappin’ erebody up in hur!” (Black Vernacular English) (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EzNhaLUT520>)

All three versions are instructional. The King James version of the commandment is very formal (“THOU SHALT NOT”). Neither the Cajun nor the BVE version change the meaning significantly. All would be effective forms of communication within their respective groups. The Cajun version is definitely influenced by southern “drawl” and the French influences (using “sha” as a derivitive of “cher” in a way that Appalachian English uses “honey” to address someone). Of course, the Old English and the BE are actually *understandable* in other dialects, the Cajun English uses words that, unless you understand that culture, you wouldn’t understand otherwise.

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